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Interim Final Rules for Group Health Plans and Health Insurance Issuers Relating to Coverage of Preventive Services Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act

Comment On: EBSA-2010-0018-0002

Group Health Plans and Health Insurance Issuers Relating to Coverage of Preventive Services under Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: Amendment

Document: EBSA-2010-0018-DRAFT-0320

Comment on FR Doc # 2011-19684

Submitter Information

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General Comment

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

I strongly urge you to make every effort to eliminate the imposition of an exemption for religious institutions in the HHS interim final rule on preventive health services [CMS-9992-IFC2] as it relates to insurance coverage for contraceptive services. The thousands of women who happen to work for Catholic and other religious institutions should not be disadvantaged by the federal government bending to a tiny minority of male church leaders who do not represent the views of a majority of the laity. Some 98 percent of sexually-active Catholic women utilize modern contraception and 68 percent support insurance coverage for contraception.

Birth control is basic health care for all women, and the federal government should not permit a solitary religious viewpoint to override good public health policy. Allowing certain faith-based organizations to avoid this statute is, in fact, promoting the private interests of a tiny religious minority. This exemption and all other refusal or conscience clauses infringe upon women's constitutional right to freedom of religion and freedom from religion. Religious as well as non-religious employees deserve equal access to contraceptive coverage. The federal government has the responsibility to ensure that all women who desire contraception coverage under the Affordable Care Act are guaranteed access. I hope that HHS will see the importance of this assurance and remove the exemption from the interim final rule (Docket I.D. = HHS-OS-2011-0023-0002).

Sincerely,

Terry A. Coble